

Jabez Bowen House
39 Bowen Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-173

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
73-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
JABEZ BOWEN HOUSE

HABS No. RI-173

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Address: 39 Bowen Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. George E. Wilson, 312 Benefit Street,
Providence 3, Rhode Island.

Present Occupant: Various Renters.

Present Use: Apartment house.

Brief Statement
of Significance: This is a two-story, frame house, built before
1759, and one of the few surviving examples from
that early period. Jabez Bowen was a physician
for whom Bowen Street is named.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1739 Executors of the estate of Joseph Williams sell to Captain Jabez Bowen about 7 acres of land on the E side of Towne Street which Joseph Williams purchased of Benjamin Wright in 1719. Bounded W partly by Towne Street and partly by Jabez Bowen and partly by a small lott taken off at SW corner belonging to heirs of Gabriel Bernon, dec. E by highway that goes across the Neck; N on land of Roger Williams S by Josiah Cotten. .with Dwelling House (now gone) for 645 £. . . Deed Book 10, page A287, in Providence City Hall.
- 1742 Roger Williams sells for 18 £ to Jabez Bowen, physician, land adjoining on the N side of home lot of Jabez Bowen whereon he now dwelleth and is part of the Homestead Lot of my grandfather, Roger Williams. Bounded W by Towne Street 10'; extends 80' E holding breadth and bounded on S side by the Jabez Bowen the whole 80'. . . Deed Book 11, page 101, in Providence City Hall.
- 1759 MARRIAGE AGREEMENT "To Hannah Smith, in lieu of her dower and in anticipation of her marriage to Jabez Bowen, the use and occupation of the southernmost half of the house on the lot of land where he now lives lying between Main Street on the W and a new street called Benefit on the E and is

bounded by said streets: S by heirs of Mawney; N by other moiety of Homestead Lot being the southmost part of his NEW DWELLING HOUSE lately built by Jabez Bowen on said premises"

- 1767 WILL Jabez Bowen. .devises to wife the Dwelling House and land contiguous to it between Main and Benefit Streets. Bounded E by Benefit St 50'; S by heirs of Mawney 100'; terminating in adjoining land given to wife . . . Wills Book 5, page 529, in Providence City Hall.
- 1794 Huldah Dyer, Jabez Bowen's daughter inherits, and her heirs sell for 660 £ a certain lot of land with Dwelling House called the Bowen House and Barn to Zachariah Allen . . . Deed Book 22, page 582, in Providence City Hall.
- 1798 Henry R. Chace, Owners and Occupants of the Lots, Houses and Shops in the Town of Providence Rhode Island in 1798 Located on Maps of the Highways of that Date (Providence, 1914): House owned by Zachariah Allen, occupied by James Fenner, House 27' x 39' . . 2 stories. . wood. N on Bowen Street; E by Joshua Salisbury. Barn 14'x18'. . 1 story . . wood. Value \$900 (From US Tax List of 1798).
- 1803 Zachariah Allen devises to his wife Ann Allen by will and the above property called the Bowen House was set off and assigned by his executors to her . . . Deed Book 27, page 280, in Providence City Hall.
- 1838 Philip Allen et al, for \$2,350 sell two lots and Dwelling House to Samuel N Richmond, merchant. Bounded: E by Richard Salisbury and Charles Holden; S by Mawney Estate; W by Ann Allen; N by Bowen St. . . . Deed Book 70, page 442, in Providence City Hall.
- 1855 Heirs of Samuel Richmond give quit claim deed to Thomas Merewether for \$3600, the same property conveyed to him by Philip Allen . . . Deed Book 140, page 249, in Providence City Hall.

This property was taxed to the following persons in the year designated:

- 1900 Thomas Merewether Estate
1921 Max Pullman
1921 Tatos M and Eli Mooradian
1923 David Perlman & Samuel Goldstein

1927 Samuel Goldstein
1930 Samuel Goldstein
1933 Samuel Goldstein Estate
1954 Celia Yuloff
1958 George Wilson and wife Margaret

2. Date of erection: Shortly before 1759
3. Notes on alterations and additions: The house was renovated and partially restored by the present owners in 1958. The interior was made over into five apartments, but keeping the original division of the rooms, the asphalt sheathing on the exterior was removed exposing the clapboarding, and the present nine over nine light windows were installed.
4. Sources of information: Antoinette Forrester Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1937), pp. 139, 205.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
December 1961.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a two-story, frame house, built shortly before 1759, and one of the few surviving examples from that early period. It preserves typical details including the Doric frontispiece, closed string stairway, and simple interior wood trim.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Five bays, two stories, 27'x 39', plus small wing at rear. Narrow end to the street on the north, with main entrance on west side.
2. Foundations: Brick in front, fieldstone in rear.
3. Wall construction: Heavy timber frame, plank walls, clapboards average 3-1/2" exposure at bottom becoming wider toward the top.
4. Stoops: Ten wood steps to front entrance.
5. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys, one in rear (south) end wall, other inside the opposite end (north) wall.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorway: Six-panel main door with top two panels lighted. Doric frontispiece, fluted pilasters, pediment, molded cornice.
- b. Windows: Nine over nine light double hung windows, 5-1/2" x 7-1/2" lights installed 1958. Unrelieved frames with large molded cornices. Second floor cornices are continuous with eave bed mold. No shutters.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, shingles.
- b. Cornice: Heavy, molded cornice.

C. Technical Description of Interior

- 1. Floor plans: Originally a single family house with entrance on side, central hall, four-room plan. Small wing on south end later. Recently made into five apartments but keeping original division of rooms - two apartments on second floor, two on first, one in basement. First floor south apartment only examined.
- 2. Stairways: Open well main stair in center hall, straight run with winders at the top, closed string with molded face on outside string, heavy molded handrail, turned balusters and newels.
- 3. Flooring: Wide, board flooring.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster, papered.
- 5. Doors and doorways: Panel doors - some two-panel, some four-panel. Simple molded architraves.
- 6. Trim: None except for beaded timber frame exposed on interior, and door and window frames. Double molded architraves on windows.
- 7. Hardware: Interior, original case locks covered with paint but seem to be of brass. Brass knobs.
- 8. Lighting: Electric.
- 9. Heating: Central heat. Diagonal fireplaces in corners of rooms at south end of house. Two fireplaces off each chimney. One-story wood mantels, molded frames around openings, paneled entablatures, mantel shelves on multiple moldings.

- D. Site: House at sidewalk line on north front, narrow lot sloping down to the west putting cellar at ground level on west side, small yard on west and south sides, driveway on east side to garage at southeast corner of lot, residential neighborhood.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
December 1961